



PREVENTION TALK

TRANSITION FROM MIDDLE SCHOOL TO HIGH SCHOOL

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Middle schools were created to help with the transition from childhood to adolescence. Much of that intention has been lost in the implementation. Statistics for middle school students show a drop in grades and attendance, increased incidence of depression, and a focus on self-criticism. These characteristics are intertwined with the risk for dropping out of school and substance abuse. Research is showing how curriculum choices, schools working together across middle school and high school levels, and parent support can really make a difference.

Parents' involvement in their children's middle school experience leads to positive outcomes in high school and beyond. There is a connection between parent involvement at the middle school level and continued parent involvement in high school. That continuity is linked to higher student achievement¹, better adjustment², and decreased risk of dropping out of school³.

REMEMBER:

"A network of support among parents, teachers and schools eases this transition."

Instructional programs that support a successful transition to high school include: hands-on, life-related learning activities; integrated instruction; and cooperative learning groups.⁴ Activities for teachers, administrators, and counselors that promote a mutual understanding of curriculum requirements at both middle school and high school levels help them better prepare students for high school. Social and academic activities directly related to the move into high school are beneficial to students.

TO THINK ABOUT:

- Eighth grade students are both excited and concerned about going into high school.
- They also admit to being nervous and scared about older students teasing them, getting lost in a large, unfamiliar school, and making bad grades.⁵
- For students identified as "at risk" for academic failure going into high school, as few as 60% may graduate with their class.⁶

ACTION STEPS:

- Help your student develop solid skills in how to study and how to manage time.
- Be directly involved in the course decisions your eighth grader will make about ninth grade classes.
- Help your school start a supportive transition program.

For more information call:

SOURCES:

- ¹ Linver, M.R. & Silverberg, S.B. (1997). Maternal predictors of early adolescent achievement-related outcomes: Adolescent gender as a moderator. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 17(3), 294-318.
- ² Hartos, J.L. & Power, T.G. (1997). Mothers' awareness of their early adolescents' stressors: Relation between awareness and adolescent adjustment. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 17(4), 371-389.
- ³ Horn, L. & West, J. (1992). National educational longitudinal study of 1988: A profile of parents of eighth graders (ED 350 341). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- ⁴ Mizelle, N.B. (1995, April). Transition from middle school into high school: The student perspective. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.
- ⁵ Cognato, C.A. (1999, October). The effects of transition activities on adolescent self-perception and academic achievement during the progression from eighth to ninth grade. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Middle School Association.
- ⁶ National Center for Education Statistics. (July, 1995). "At-risk" Eighth-Graders Four Years Later. (Publication No. 1995-396-227-814/30773). Retrieved November 5, 2004, from National Center for Education Statistics via <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs95/95736.pdf>